

David Martin Remarks

Candidate for Mayor of Stamford

April 20, 2013

Hello, everyone. Thank you for coming.

This morning, I want to speak to you specifically about the recent proposal to rebuild the boatyard at the site known as 205 Magee Avenue. And I also want to speak more broadly about the direction the City of Stamford has been taking.

The announcement in the summer of 2011 that Yacht Haven Marina was closing forever was an unpleasant surprise to many area boat owners. Stamford has one of the few deep-water harbors on western Long Island Sound, and the location on Stamford harbor's West Branch had been home to a working boatyard for more than a century.

As you may know, a working boatyard on the 14 acre Yacht Haven Marina site was required as part of a 2007 zoning approval given to Building and Land Technology (BLT) that is today transforming Stamford's South End.

The original 14 acre site was, so to speak, a no brainer.

Not only does the site offer adequate space for boatyard repair and storage, it is also located on the easily navigable West Branch of Stamford harbor.

But some time thereafter, a new opportunity arose – with the announcement that Bridgewater Capital wanted to build a new headquarters on the former boatyard site – and BLT began looking for an alternative place for the boatyard.

BLT focused its attention on a 3.5 acre property it owns at 205 Magee Avenue – just across the way from here.

However, in a report issued this past February, an independent consultant found BLT's proposed Magee Avenue site to be significantly inferior to the original South End location.

Then, on March 28th the Mayor announced a deal with BLT, to “license” 2.4 acres of city parkland, where we are standing, that abuts BLTs property.

The deal enables BLT to address some of the problems identified in the consultant's report . . . and includes some sweeteners, like sponsoring Fourth of July fireworks, for the City.

There has been much confusion about what City approvals are required to authorize this new deal and this “license”.

At first the Pavia administration said a license didn’t require any approvals. Later they said they would present the deal to various city Boards but were unclear if their approval was required.

So let **me** be clear . . .

As far as I’m concerned, Section 9-7 D of the Stamford Code requires that any use of city-owned property exceeding 3 months shall require the same approval as a lease.

I should know, I wrote that section over 20 years ago, and the Board of Reps passed it to avoid the very confusion which is happening now.

What it means is that this deal requires the approval of the Planning Board, the Board of Finance, and the Board of Representatives, in addition to approvals from the Harbor Management Commission and the Zoning Board.

And when this proposal comes before the Board of Finance . . .

I will vote NO.

In addition, I will urge my colleagues on the Board of Finance, and my former colleagues on the Board of Representatives,

to vote NO.

Please do not misconstrue my remarks:

- I want the transformation in the South End that BLT is orchestrating to succeed.
- I want Bridgewater to come to Stamford.
- And I even believe that BLT has the ability to physically construct a facility here at this site with modest boat storage and maintenance capability.

That’s not the problem.

The problem is that the Mayor’s BLT deal does not satisfy the original intent of the zoning approval requiring a functioning boatyard, a zoning approval that rewarded the developer with additional development rights — upwards of 700 housing units and nearly 122,000 square feet of commercial space.

I have been following this issue and listening to people in the community talk about it ever since BLT closed the former boatyard, and then demolished it, in early 2012.

And while there are many open questions, concerns and legal arguments surrounding the boatyard, let me cut through all of them and tell you why **I will NEVER vote for a boatyard at this Magee Avenue site.**

First, the site on the eastern channel of Stamford Harbor does not offer the navigability that is at the original site. No amount of dredging can ever overcome this problem.

Second, boaters, as well as the city's Harbor Commission, are concerned that the eastern channel of Stamford Harbor is too narrow and heavily trafficked.

Third, BLT and the Mayor are seeking to use City parkland and turn it into an industrial use - breaking a commitment between the City and its residents about the use of this property.

In 1999, on the Board of Representatives, I voted in favor of making this property a park, and I am not going to break my commitment and vote now to turn this park into an industrial boatyard.

Because of these fundamental problems with this site I do not believe this proposal will ever be approved by all the necessary Boards.

Therefore I urge both the Mayor and BLT to stop pursuing this site.

It is just wasting time, when what we need is to get to work on an acceptable plan.

But the boatyard question is just a symptom of a larger issue . . . so please let me turn my attention to the matter of the direction this city has been taking.

It's a concern that I am beginning to hear from Stamford residents every day. The boatyard is just one example.

Just this week, Congress voted against universal background checks for the purchase of guns. Even though 90% of Americans, and over 70% of gun enthusiasts and owners support such regulations.

In our hearts we all know why this vote failed – money and special interests are courting political favors and influencing politicians' votes. It is a cancer that is eating away at our democracy.

The question is: is this cancer spreading to Stamford? Are important decisions being influenced by those who have the most political muscle and the most cash? Are outside

interests getting special favors and allowed to skirt important regulations? Are promises made, that are never intended to be honored?

I support smart development that provides jobs for Stamford's citizens and increases our tax base.

I want BLT to succeed in their development of Stamford's South End. And in many ways, they have done an excellent job.

But everyone must follow the rules.

- It is simply absurd for BLT to contend that the Waterside School satisfies the cultural space requirements for the South End Development, and use this as an excuse to push out the Loft Artists.
- Four years ago we were told new zoning was needed at the Gateway site next to the train station for a new un-named tenant. It's been 4 years, and we are still waiting to see that tenant.
- And I talk to Stamford citizens who are wondering why they can't get a construction job with all the building going on in the South End.

We need to change the direction in which the City is moving.

Government and business must work together to move our City forward.

We need transparency

We need openness.

We need someone to look out for ordinary guy.

I think it is no secret that I am running for Mayor.

When I announced that I was running for Mayor a few short weeks ago, I declared that we must offer our people confidence in city hall.

We need a Mayor who is an honest broker of ideas and policies . . . without hidden political agendas, and without outside special interests.

My vision for Stamford is a city that builds on its greatness by providing opportunity and security for the **people that live here.**

Seniors. Young families. Singles.

Life-long residents and the newly arrived.

Our children. And our children's children.

Stamford must be a city that nurtures local entrepreneurs and businesses while still protecting the specialness of our neighborhoods.

Moving away from the cancer of money and outside special interests is not going to be easy. It's going to be tough. We will face a number of challenges along the way.

But together, we can write the next, and best, chapter in Stamford's story, . . . a chapter that my children, and your children, will be proud of.

This is not just about the Boatyard, and it not just about my campaign for Mayor,. . . it is for the future of Stamford.

Let's get to work....for the future of Stamford.

I thank you all again for coming.